A PREFATORY PROLOGUE,

By way of INTRODUCTION,

To one Spoken by Mr. Betterton at OXFORD, on Monday the 5th of July.

Spoken by Mr. Mills at the Theatre-Royal in Drury-Lane, on Friday the 16th of July, 1703.

26. July. 1703.

AS *Paupers* who on Charity are fed,
Shou'd bleſs their abſent Patrons for their Bread,
Tho' for a while no wonted Bounty's fall,
And Pious Ears are diſtant from their call:
So would we let our Gratitude be ſeen,
Both for our Friends that *are*, and Friends have *been*;
To theſe, that by their Gracious Smiles we Live;
To thoſe, for Favours they vouchſaf'd to give;
But to'ther Houſe has other Methods choſe,
And treat their diſtant Friends like common Foes:
Traduce their Judgments, and their Senſe deride,
Who never Judg'd *amiſs*, but on *their ſide*;

Like

Like Mercinary's reeking from the Stews,
Who in one Lover's Arms the reſt Abuſe.
Nothing have we to pleaſe you that is New,
In them ev'n Ridicule is out of View,
And not a Subject left ſince they withdrew.
Satyr is loſt in this deſerted Town,
And we can give no Scandal but their own:
Accept it then, 'tis inoffenſive Writ,
And take their Satyr on *Themſelves* for Wit:
Since it's baſe Spite your Characters ſecures,
And ſhews their want of Sence in blaming yours,
As you diſtinguiſh ours from their deſigns,
And know their grateful Temper by their Lines.

Here Mr. Mills *Reads the Prologue that* Mr. Betterton *Spoke at* Oxford.

PROLOGUE

To the Univerſity of Oxford,

Spoken by Mr. *Betterton*, on *Monday*, *July* the 5th, 1703.

ONce more our London *Muſes pleas'd repair*
To this bleſs'd Seat, and breath their Native Air;
Here ſeek Protection from their Kindred Gown,
Glad to retire from that degenerate Town:
Where ſpurious Criticks in falſe Judgment ſit,
Debauch'd with Farce, and negligent of Wit;
Our Indignation equally they raiſe,
Whether they Frown, or Smile upon our Plays,
And Damn us with the Scandal of their Praiſe.
Now to our wiſh, we have an Audience found,
Which will be pleas'd with Senſe, as well as Sound;
You only can Reform th' Unthinking Age,
Redeem our Credit loſt, and Dignify the Stage.
Wit is your Growth, and now ('tis all we crave)
Retrieve that Honour which before you gave:
Poetry yet will thrive, if rais'd by you;
As Plants their fading Vigour will renew,
From that kind Soil in which at firſt they Grew
Your Learned Cenſures will Inſtruct the Town,
And teach them when to Smile, and when to Frown,
And by your Judgment to improve their own.
You as Wits Higher Powers our Doom reveal,
From whoſe deciſive Court ther's no Appeal.

Then

Then riſe Athenians! *in the juſt Defence*
Of Poetry oppreſs'd, and long neglected Sence;
The Reputation of our Art advance,
Suppreſs th' Exorbitance of Song and Dance,
And in one Pow'rful Party Conquer France:
Nor have we Vicious Entertainments brought;
You ſafely may Approve, and Smile without a Fault.
With Shame we muſt confeſs, our City Gueſts
Have been regal'd with ſuch unwholſome Feaſts;
With Greedineſs the fulſome Bait they ſeize,
And Dreſs'd in Vice, ev'n Sence it ſelf will pleaſe.
But now w'have nought t' offend the Chaſteſt Ear,
You from imputed Crimes our Stage ſhall clear,
For none will bluſh to own, what you vouchſafe to hear.

Thus far their Poet, who might Bluſh to View
An Audience he Condemns in Cens'ring You:
If Pens Immodeſt, what was Modeſt knew.
Now on Your ſide the *London* Muſe ſhould riſe,
And Vindicate whom all that know muſt prize;
But you'll give leave, Our Anſwer be delay'd,
Till in the following Scenes our Duty's pay'd:
Thoſe finiſh'd once, and Honour'd with your Sight,
Our Epilogue ſhall do their Prologue Right.

THE EPILOGUE,

By way of ANSWER,

To the foregoing

PROLOGUE,

Spoken by Mr. MILLS.

HAD *Athens* all the *Grecian* ſence Engroſs'd,
Thebes had of courſe the glorious *Pindar* loſt;
The Spartan Genius would but dimnly ſhine,
And *Lacedemon* ſhew a worthleſs Line:
Juſt ſo would Wits Affairs in *Britain* Stand,
Should *Oxford* hold the Stocks of all the Land;
London's Emporium Bankrupt would appear
And *Cambridge* ceaſe to boaſt an Offspring here,
Whoſe Judgments we muſt ever praiſe and fear.

Not that we'd ſpeak, without an Awefull Dread,
Of what ſuch learned Ornaments has bred,
Far be the Thought, and diſtant the Intent,
We live by the ſupports which all have lent;
And tender of our own, and Patrons Fame,
Muſt never Act the Faults we come to Blame.

Your *Frowns* and *Smiles*, whom others treat with Scorn,
Have been by Us with due Submiſſion born:
The Firſt We'll make Endeavours to avoid,
The Laſt with thankfullneſs ſhall be enjoy'd,
As we Exert our Strength and utmoſt Pow'r,
To ſink their Tottering Stage by raiſing Our.

What e're they mean's a Secret yet unknown,
For ſure they cannot mean to Act in Town,
Or hope Your Preſence will ſet out their Plays,
And * Scandalize 'em more with Grants of praiſe. * Vid. Ox. Prol.

No, no, as then Compaſſion made you kind,
Let juſt Reſentments work upon your Mind,

Sup-

Support our Intereſt, and Our cauſe aſiſt,
Nor ſtand by them, whom thoſe they Flatter'd * Hiſs'd,
Who ſpight of Panegyricks on the Gown,
Juſtly reveal their Judgment in their Frown:
As they find fault with Songs, by Songs preſerv'd,
And Laugh at Follies, but for which they'd Starv'd,
As they their Gratitude by railing prove,
And ſhew their Modeſty by *Love* * *for Love*,
Leſt you, not they, ſhould leſſen your Eſteem,
And give *your ſelves* the *Scandal* given to them.

* *The* Prol. *was Hiſs'd 3 days following.*

* *The firſt Play they Acted, at which the* Prol. *was ſpoken.*

FINIS.